

## Rising Sun

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# **Rising Sun**

by [Nika\\_Raven\\_Celeste](#)

## Summary

Wen Lin is not like what the rumor said about the wen.

He is kind. Compassionate. Melancholic.

Wei Ying likes him. He likes having a friend outside the Jiang Disciple. He likes having a friend where he can be himself and not shamed for it.

Even if Wen Lin's other identity is... surprising.

You really can make friends anywhere and everywhere, huh?

They say the Wen were arrogant and condescending. Viewing themselves above the rest simply just because they can. Because they were the oldest Cultivation Sect around. Because they were wealthy. Because they have largest territory, followed by the Nie, and because they have the largest number of disciples. Because they have Wen Ruohan, the strongest cultivator, as their Sect Leader.

Personally, Wei Ying did not like painted everyone with the same brush just because of few (or a lot of) bad eggs. Not all Wen are arrogant. He knew.

Because Wen Lin certainly is not.

They meet years ago. When Wei Ying was only thirteen. When he was not yet named Head Disciple of Yunmeng Jiang.

They meet on a Night Hunt in Yiling. Wei Ying followed his Shixionsgs and Shijies tracking down a problematic and slippery Yao. They almost had it, but it manages to pull an escape. TWICE! And it did it in a way that made them either tripped or hitting each other, thankfully non-lethal, but the humiliation...! They were furious and the hunt became *personal*.

However, the hunt was dragged too long that the rain had fallen and mist formed. Limiting their vision. That was when the Yao strike from the mist. It was chaos all around as they have to be careful lest it was their fellow disciple who got into “friendly fire”.

Wei Ying was trying to help a Shixiong of his who got his leg stuck in the muddy ground, he didn't notice the Yao was aiming at him, at least not until a sword skewer it. Killing it instantly.

His savior came into view. Wearing a hood that hide most of his facial feature, but the sun emblem on his robe indicated who he was.

A Wen.

He introduces himself as Wen Lin, and no. The Wen did not mean to crashed into Jiang Night Hunt. There's no other Wen. He was alone, and he didn't even plan a Night Hunt. He honestly was in the nearby village, when the Yao was making ruckus and scared the inhabitants. They currently were way too close to that village for everyone's comfort.

Many were suspicious, but finally relents and accept it.

Wei Ying was thankful, though. If not for him, he would've been injured, if not dead.

When he told Wen Lin that much, since he joined them going to the village for a rest and change of clothes, Wei Ying swore that he saw Wen Lin turned pale with his eyes widen. Concern. Fear.

That intrigues Wei Ying. He tried to keep a tab of this wayward Wen whenever he could.

That's how Wei Ying notices Wen Lin sneak out of the inn at crack ass hour in the morning the next day, and follows him. Navigates their way through the still empty road of Yiling in the cold morning. Wen Lin wore his cloak so it was not that hard to follow him.

He went to a mountain that reeks of resentment so much Wei Ying can feel the hair on his arms and neck were standing on their own.

He knows what this place is.

Burial Mounds. The cesspit of resentful energy no one could ever purify. Many had tried, with various methods, and no one succeeded.

"What are you doing here?" Wei Ying remembers himself asking that.

Wen Lin turned in surprise and wariness, one hand on his sword. When he saw it was Wei Ying, tension bled out from him as his shoulders sagged in relief.

"Paying respect." He replied curtly, turned back to the burial mounds, kneeling, and clasping his hand in respect.

Tentatively, Wei Ying approached him, kneeling as well.

"Who?" He asked. Curious.

"My family. And... someone who might as well be part of it." Wen Lin replied tightly. His hands trembled. "They were... thrown here. Locked here. Murdered here."

"I'm sorry."

"Not your fault."

That was the beginning of their strange friendship.

.

Since that, Wei Ying sometimes sneaks into Yiling to meet Wen Lin. Usually when Madam Yu goes into Night Hunt of her own. He already could fly with his sword so it's possible to go there and come back before anyone realizes he was gone. He does not always find Wen Lin, but they met quite often and it was the same village. The locals start to recognize them on sight for that.

"You seem to have a lot of time." Wen Lin comments. "Try to not get caught."

Wei Ying just laughed weakly at that.

From what he gleams, Wen Lin is different from what people said about the Wen.

Wen Lin is kind.

Well, not kind. He's capable of cruelty. Like that one time he threw a stray dog across the road when it tried to steal his meat bun and scares the shit out of Wei Ying. Or that time he broke hands of a drunkard who insults him.

But compares to all atrocity Wei Ying heard about the Wen Clan, Wen Lin seems to be a Saint.

A melancholic Saint.

Wen Lin seems to be living with regrets and longing, as if he had done the Unforgivable and regrets it immensely. Especially when he gazes at the Burial Mounds.

"I owe him so much," Wen Lin said once, drunk over the wine. "He did his best but... there's so many opposed him, vilified him, and I can't do anything to help. In the end, he broke. Died. On that hill." He jabbed his chin towards the Burial Mounds.

Wei Ying traced his cup. "Have you... retrieve his corpse?"

"Here's the thing," Wen Lin's smile was broken. Empty. "There's nothing to be retrieve. The Fierce corpse torn his body apart till nothing was left."

Wei Ying can only bow his head in silence.

There's nothing he could say to that.

.

Wen Lin bought a home in Yiling. Jokingly states that if they're going to meet here so often, might as well make a base. This prompted Wei Ying to handed over his purse on that meeting, and several meetings after that.

"I gotta foot the bill too!" He insists.

Wen Lin just laughed and accept, but Wei Ying would find his purse back at him when he left Yiling, not a single coin used.

"You need it more than I did," he said, when Wei Ying finally had enough and confronted him.

As if he knew that Wei Ying barely had any pocket money, for Madam Yu claims he didn't deserve it since the Jiang had "painstakingly" take him from the street, feed him and clothe him and allows him to have a roof above his head, not to mention allows him to cultivate.

There, Wei Ying sees more of sides Wen Lin had. Not overt, not like Wen Lin suddenly opens up to him. He was still secretive and melancholic, but it was shown in how the house was taken care of.

Some simple knick-knacks that was reusable and can be repurposed. A big room filled with bookshelves, containing tons of books and scrolls. From history to poetry, medical notes to romance novel, book about cultivations to cooking books. Another room was stocked full with medical implements. Operation table, bedrest, a cabinet stoked with bandages, balm, and various medicines, as well a map of location where one can find herbs with medical properties. The kitchen was stoked full with food, mostly rice and those that can last long without going stale or rotting, provide they were stored properly. Spirit Repelling talisman were plastered on the walls. Hell, some were even painted on the very foundation itself.

He was... it was as if he was prepared for the worst to come.

“Did you have a hard time?” Wei Ying find himself asking.

Wen Lin paused.

“I won’t call it hard.” He spoke slowly. “If you mean, am I being bullied, no. I am not. I... I am high on the caste. Very high on the food chain. No one dare to bully me. They might’ve tried to give me slip every now and then, but outright pressuring me to do something... no one dares. But...” he paused, and sighed. “But I can’t say I am happy.”

Something in Wen Lin’s expression made Wei Ying’s stomach churned. He... he thinks he know it.

“Are you... lonely?”

“I think I am.” Wen Lin answered after a while. “Being on the top is lonely. If... if you are on position no one else could reach, a position that only you could achieve, then... then you have to prepare for a feeling no one else could feel, a feeling no one else could understands.”

“You didn’t tell your friends?”

Wen Lin’s smile was bitter and self-depreciating.

“Don’t have. Friends. I don’t have friends. Perhaps once upon a time, I do. But now...” he sighed.

Wei Ying frowned. “Am I not your friend?” he asked.

Wen Lin blinked, then his whole posture changed. “Is that supposed to be a joke?” He asked, with no small amount of indignation.

Okay. What was that? “Can’t I?”

“I am Wen.”

“Are you telling me we can’t be friends just because you’re a Wen?”

“Nobody want to be friends with a Wen.” His reply was bitter. “Some may try to make connections in order to gain something. Resources for some. Favor, most does. Actual friendship? Nobody does.” With that, he storms off.

Leaving Wei Ying speechless.

.

Wen Lin was doing something with talisman when Wei Ying enters. He was so focused in it that he didn't notice him.

Or not. He briefly raised his head before returning back to the talisman.

Sighing, Wei Ying sat across him.

“Hey.” He spoke. “Look, regarding our last discussion... I am sorry. I don't mean to—”

“Stop.” Ordered Wen Lin. He looked up. Red eye shines through the shadow. Privately Wei Ying wonders if it was any comfortable wearing hood all the time. “You don't have to apologize. It was... it was my fault.”

“Well,” Wei Ying grinned, “if it was not any problem, I consider you as my friend. Regardless you consider me yours or not.”

Wen Lin huffed.

“You don't know me.”

He is right.

Wen Lin is an enigma. Even though they know each other for years, Wei Ying hardly knows anything about him. Wen Lin guards his secret like Tiger protecting its cub. Only give out what he wants to give. Wei Ying had to read him. His posture, his action, his voice tone. He can't read his face since the hood obscure it.

“It's fine.”

But Wen Lin didn't ask about Wei Ying either.

“Now, what are you working about?”

“This? Purification talisman.”

“Purification Talisman?”

“En.” Wen Lin nodded. “I wonder if the backyard was good for gardening. It would be good to grow a fruit tree or some herbal plants. But this close to the Burial Mound, the ground was

soaked with resentful energy. There's a reason why farming done outside the town. I don't know if any plants grown here in turn would soak that energy, and I really don't want to know what would happen if that was true and said plants being consumed. Therefore, the earth must be purified first."

"That's interesting!" Wei Ying exclaimed. "Plants that soak resentful energy would in turn produce fruit with trace of resentful energy. Maybe not overt, maybe it was of low quantity, but it was still there and if consumed continuously, it will affect the body one way or another. That *does* sounds like bad idea. But how is the talisman suppose to work? Does it absorb the resentful energy? Or does it move the energy somewhere? But that means the area around it will have high concentration of resentful energy, won't it? Would the area stay pure of resentful energy or would it gradually soak it back? If it was to be used for long term, then it should stay clean. The talisman can't be permanent, right? So, it must have an expired date. How long it would last and how big the area of effect? The plants need to be watered. Where do we get the water? If we built a well, does the water was also clean or was it soak the resentful energy? Does the talisman work with the water or not? Does—"

Wei Ying stopped and realize he was rambling when Wen Lin stares at him with wide eyes.

"Umm..."

Slowly, the other smiled. "Do you want to help?"

"If it was not any bother..."

.

"I'm going to Gusu."

Wen Lin paused, then nodded.

"It's almost the annual Gusu Lectures." He said. "And Gusu is farther than Yunmeng, with three thousand rules, and several disciples patrolling at the night in rotation. You can't sneak out from there."

"Are you going to miss me?"

"Yeah."

Wei Ying blushed. He intends to tease Wen Lin, only to face with blunt truth.

Well, "I'll miss you too."

It was fun, being friends with Wen Lin. Sure, they have secrets, and there's respective boundary between them, but it was relaxing. Back home, Wei Ying has to constantly watch his actions. He is neither stupid nor blind. He knows he's the powder keg in Jiang Family's



dynamics. Bad enough he surpassed Jiang Cheng in cultivation, being the Da-Shixiong instead First Shidi / Er-Shixiong. It's hard to get a hobby for himself, one that is different from others.

He still remembers how his flute was thrown away because he's so good at it while Jiang Cheng barely can make notes that was NOT ear-splitting screeching sound.

His shidis and shimeis does seem to leave him for punishment, even if they do participate in the crime.

But, here, he doesn't have to watch himself. Wen Lin would stare at him with this disappointed aura around him if Wei Ying holding back. He was allowed to exceed, to reach his limit. He was allowed to have hobby. He was allowed to ramble as much as he likes, messing with Talisman and arrays. Sometimes Wen Lin would join and they end up in heated and long debates.

It was fun.

Perhaps this was the reason Wen Lin seek solitude from other Wens. Creating a Sanctuary in this backwater town where no one thought to check. A place to be himself and not being shamed for it.

"Guess I'll see you later next year. After I'll back."

"Mm."

Wen Lin took off his hood.

Wei Ying gaped. Wen Lin... NEVER took his hood off before. That, and he's handsome. With sharp jaw, high cheekbone, and phoenix red eyes.

"Wow." He croaked out. "You're handsome."

That, did get a reaction. A shudder to be exact.

"Please don't have a crush on me." He said pleadingly. "You're of same age as my youngest son and my nephew. I'm not into pedophilia."

Wait. WHAT?!

.

"Wen Lin~ I'm back!"

"Wait. Isn't the Lecture not over yet?"

“I got kicked out.”

“HOW DID YOU GET KICKED OUT?!”

“Let’s say, I got into fight with Peacock.”

“Who’s peacock? No. that’s not important. You get kicked out? For starting a fight?”

“Finishing a fight.”

“Same difference. Who decides the punishment?”

“Old Man Qiren. You know him?”

“We went into same lecture years ago. What the fuck is he thinking? Fighting only resulting in hit by discipline paddle, not expulsion! Does this peacock was a sect heir or something.”

“Lanling Jin’s.”

“Figure. What the fuck Qiren. I thought prejudice is prohibited. You know what, I don’t care. Wei Ying, get some paper and brush. I’ll fill the gap.”

“Eh, but—”

“No buts. Lan Clan held political lecture on second half of study year. Since you don’t have it because they’re being unfairly prejudiced against you despite their own rule forbade it, I’m going to teach you so you won’t pull a major social and political faux pass and accidentally start a war between sects.”

.

“Thank you for coaxing my nephew. I’m afraid he’s too much of scaredy cat to stand up for himself despite needing it the most. Hopefully he can do it with proper motivation and support.”

Jolted, Wei Ying turned and his eyes widened.

Wen Lin...!

“U-Uncle?!” Exclaimed Wen Ning.

Wait, uncle? Oh gosh, so Wen Ning is his nephew. They *do* belong in the same age group. Uh, wait...

“A-Ning. Your sister has been searching you. Did you forget to inform her you’re going to practice? I suggest you go to her now.”

If possible, Wen Ning seemed to be turned into a corpse.

“Y-yes, uncle...”

Now it was only two of them.

“So...” Wei Ying coughed. “Did you projected onto Wen Ning or something?”

Because the “Lin” in Qionglin was of the same character as Wen Lin’s name.

“I... may or may not.”

Yeah. Figures.

Wei Ying observed Wen Lin. He was... wearing proper high-born clothes. White and red with sun and flame. A highly decorated Guan on his head. He *did* say he was of high position where there’s no one could bully him...

“Are you entering the Archery Competition?”

“Yup!”

“I see...” Wen Lin nodded, then his expression hardened. “Wei Ying, there’s something I’d like you to know.”

“Mm?”

“You will see me again, soon, but don’t approach me.”

EH? “Why?”

“Remember when I told you I don’t have friends? It was more of people think I can’t make or deserve friends.” That was... pitiful. “Though my manner leaves lots to be desired. Though I can assure you, I don’t act hypocrite. I am acting according to my honest feelings. I’ll be just... *colder*. Much much **colder**.”

.

“I thought Sect Leader Wen would be as bad as that ugly bastard.” Commented Jiang Cheng. “Turns out he’s decent.”

“A-Cheng.” Uncle Jiang gently shushed him. “Don’t be rude to our host, okay?”

“But you agree with me, right?!” Jiang Cheng suddenly turn to Wei Ying with ‘support me’ look.

Wei Ying got really good at reading people, thanks to Wen Lin.

“Well...”

Wen Lin...

His courtesy name Wen Ruohan.

The Sect Leader of Qishan Wen.

It was jarring. When Wei Ying first saw him among the Sect Leaders, his soul almost escapes his body. To think Wen Lin was actually *that* person... it's hard to compares the Melancholic and kind Wen Lin to aloof Wen Ruohan.

Hard doesn't mean impossible, though, for ultimately Wei Ying can still found traces of his... friend... on Wen Ruohan. The way he squared his shoulders when he's feeling defensive, the way he stares right ahead but not quite meeting anyone eyes when refusing to continue a topic, the way his jaw clenched when he had to reign himself back from screaming or throwing a punch. And the underlying tone in his voice.

“I think, We—Sect Leader Wen is... lonely.”

He got stares of that. Incredulous. As if he had grown second head. Or losing the only one he had.

“Lonely?” Uncle Jiang ask with raised eyebrow. “That was... interesting choice of word.”

Wei Ying thinks back to Wen Lin's expression. Of how he confessed how alone he was. Remembers his word about feelings only he could feel, for standing in position without an equal.

“Lonely is a fitting word.”

.

“What should I call you?”

“Wen Lin is fine. You're the only one who call me that.”

“That's... sad.”

“I know.”

.

“Have no one notice you’ve been gone?”

“Even if they do, they won’t dare. Not when I explicitly tell them I want to be left alone and not to be disturbed.”

“Won’t it be a neglect?”

“To whom?”

“Your Sect? Your family? Your *children*?”

Wen Lin paused.

“Wen Xu can hold the Sect matters while I’m gone. As of family... I never connected to them, and it would be too late to start now.”

“Better late than never.”

“They don’t need me anymore.”

He’s really pitiful.

.

“Wei Ying?!”

“Tell me to leave.” Wei Ying bite back his tears. “Tell me that I’m being a bother to you. Tell me you’re tired of me. Tell me that I’m annoying brat who wasting your times away. Tell me. ***Tell me.***”

Wen Lin—Wen Ruohan stared, before scooping him up in a hug. Maneuvering him to the kitchen and seated Wei Ying on a chair before pouring him a tea. Lavender. Then standing there awkwardly as if he didn’t know what to do.

It was better than what Wei Ying received at *there*.

“...take your time.”

That was LEAGUES better than what he received *there*.

And that, made Wei Ying burst into tears.

.

Wen Ruohan watched how Wei Ying somehow manage to bully his way to tutoring Wen Chao on archery while coaxing Wen Ning to be more assertive simultaneously. Some disciples nearby paused in their own training to listen attentively on his instructions.

He had been in Qishan for two months, yet he had wormed his way into everyone's heart. There's some who hates his presence. Mostly petty jealousy over his accomplishment despite him being "a servant's son" or believing those rumors spread by Jiangs. Some because of how fast Wen Ruohan had taken a liking to him. But in the end, Wei Ying's easy going, innovative, and bright spirited nature won people over. It helps that he never led people wrong and manage to inspire others. Pushing them to do better, to be better, but never once pushing them close to breaking point. Always know when to call it quit and give rest. Never shy of giving out praise if it was deserved. Never mind if he had to breakdown his explanation into something simpler or if he had to repeat it.

A natural born leader.

It was not a surprise, seeing how easy he was in integrating with the Wens despite did not (formally) becoming one of them (yet).

After all, in another lifetime, Wei Ying was his "successor" in leading the Wen Remnants.

Another lifetime. A future that had come to pass and will not happens.

Wen Ruohan closed his eyes. Remembering the dark times after his death in that lifetime. Forced to wander over the world as a ghost. Neither resentful or spiritual. Forced to watch his clansmen being hunted down like animal in hunting season. Be it cultivators who manage to survive the war itself, or civilians who had no business in the war. Or even people who aren't Wen but simply lived in Qishan area or married with or has business with Wen.

No one came to their help.

No one bother to do proper investigation.

Their claims over justice and righteousness had been a lie. A façade to hide their rotten nature underneath. Ha. And they called Wen Ruohan a monster when in reality he had only been honest with his true nature.

The only one who cares, was Wei Ying.

He's the only one who willing to extends kindness to them, even at cost working himself to the ground. To his own death.

Wen Ruohan respects him and owed him a great debt.

That's why, when he somehow returned to the past, the first thing he do was create a Sanctuary area in case of war ever break out and Qishan Wen is backed into a corner. Yiling was one of those sanctuary. Maybe he was just sentimental but his sentimentality won out.

He met a young Wei Ying. Bright eyed, innocent, childish, and pure Wei Ying, but no less intelligent than the man who create whole cultivation path by himself out of desperation for

survival.

He originally intends to lure Wei Ying to his side. Without him, had the war still broke out, Qishan Wen won't face total annihilation. He doesn't have to join the war. His job was to protect the innocents. Appealing to his better nature while using him well. Yet...

Yet Wen Ruohan grow fond of him.

Wei Ying is like a fresh breeze. A welcome change. A sanctuary where he can be himself.

His melancholy was not an act. It was genuine. He did mourn his family. All fifty Wen Remnants. Elders and a child. He did sadden by other timeline Wei Ying's death and mourned him. He did owe him unpayable debt. He did get tired of being Wen Ruohan all the time. He did want a time where he can be himself, propriety be damned.

Being with Wei Ying was surprisingly stress free. Even when they hate each other for some reason, it would be quick to pass.

Being with Wei Ying was like rediscovering his humanity, rediscovering himself.

Wei Ying is kind. Talented. Smart. Compassionate. Charismatic.

He is everything Wen Ruohan wanted as successor and more.

It was *truly* a shame the Jiangs are so stupid to not see what a **wonderful** person he is. Right? Envy was truly a scary thing.

Their loss, his gain.

He will made sure to not mistreat Wei Ying. He will make sure Wei Ying deserve the attention and praises he deserves. That he will get recognition for his accomplishments just as he deserves. He will make sure he would never have to cry in despair, thinking he has no place anywhere.

Wen Ruohan's fist clenched.

He will take care of Wei Ying. He will make sure Wei Ying would be happy and well.

"Fuqin." Wen Xu approached him. "Here's the list of our best disciples, specialty, and achievement."

"Mm, good job." He ignores how Wen Xu flushes at the tiniest bit of praise.

"If I may, where are you going to strike?"

Oh dear. "Do you think I'm going to annexed some territories?" How adorable Wen Xu's thought is.

"You're not?" Wen Xu look at him in surprise. "Then those disciples...?"

“Well, rather than some meaningless territory, what do you think about the Burial Mounds?”

“Burial Mounds...?” Wen Xu’s mouth goes slack jawed. “Are you... are you trying to tame it? Father, pardon my words, but many tried and failed. Are you sure you can do it?”

Wen Ruohan turned over to Wei Ying, who now treated Wen Chao and Wen Ning like pair of cats. One hissing and other leaning onto him appreciatively.

“I have good feelings we will be successful.”

He and Wei Ying had discussed over it, several times. Making multiple hypothetical plans, revised them, and backup plans. It would be shame to not implements them. Combines with the working purification talisman, and how Wei Ying always deems them not good enough and sought out to improve them...

Wen Ruohan smiled.

“We *will* succeed.”

The spring is coming.

And the future is looking bright.



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